United Nations A/CONF.228/3

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 July 2016

Original: English

Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020
Antalya, Turkey, 27-29 May 2016

Report on the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

16-12054 (E) 030816

Please recycle

Contents

Chapter		*Page*
	Introduction	3
I.	Resolutions adopted by Midterm Review	6
II.	Organization of work and other organizational matters	32
III.	Review of the implementation: general exchange of views	38
IV.	Thematic round-table meetings	43
V.	Adoption of the political declaration	50
VI.	Adoption of the report on the Midterm Review	51
VII.	Closure of the Midterm Review	52
Annexes		
I.	List of documents	53
II.	Side events	54
III.	Antalya declaration of the least developed country civil society forum	57

Introduction

The Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul in May 2011, constitutes an ambitious policy agenda, agreed by the international community, to address the challenges faced by the least developed countries, based on the fundamental tenets of mutual accountability and enhanced international cooperation.

The overarching goal of the Programme of Action is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category. It also recognizes that the least developed countries represent an enormous potential for world economic growth, stability and prosperity.

Pursuant to its resolutions 69/231 and 70/216, the General Assembly decided to hold the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016, in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016.

The scope of the Midterm Review was mandated as follows:

(a) To undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by the least developed countries and their development partners, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues;

(b) To reaffirm the global commitment to addressing the special needs of the least developed countries made at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and to further strengthen the global partnership for development for the least developed countries in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, in order to ensure the timely, effective and full implementation of the Programme of Action during the remainder of the Decade, while taking into account the post-2015 development agenda as it relates to the least developed countries.

The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States was designated as the focal point for the review, with responsibility for ensuring that the preparations were carried out effectively and efficiently and mobilizing and coordinating the active involvement of the organizations of the United Nations system. The Office prepared a comprehensive five-year report on the implementation of the Programme of Action (A/71/66), which shows a mixed picture.

As a critical input for the Midterm Review, broad-based and inclusive country-level preparations were undertaken by many of the least developed countries with a view to assessing the progress made, the actions and measures necessary to further the implementation of the Programme of Action and the obstacles and constraints encountered. Two meetings of the national focal points of the least developed countries were held in preparation for the Midterm Review, at which they had an

opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned. A report summarizing the main points described in the national reports was published.[1]

Two regional preparatory meetings were organized: one by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) for the least developed countries in Africa plus Haiti, entitled "Regional preparatory mid-term review meeting of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Africa", held in Algiers on 5 May 2016, and one by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for the least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific plus Yemen, entitled "High-level policy dialogue on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in Asia and the Pacific", held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, from 4 to 6 March 2015, with the overall coordination and guidance of the Office of the High Representative.

The President of the General Assembly organized a one-day thematic event on 11 February 2016, focusing on the synergy between the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and renewed global partnerships for development.

A four-day preparatory meeting of experts was also organized by the President of the General Assembly, at which consultations on the draft outcome document were held.

The President of the General Assembly appointed the Permanent Representatives of Belgium and Benin as co-facilitators to oversee and direct informal intergovernmental consultations on all issues relating to the Midterm Review. They were requested to present a draft outcome document in the form of a political declaration, prepared on the basis of inputs from the national and regional preparatory meetings, the report of the Secretary-General and other inputs, including those from Member States. The preparatory meeting of experts was held from 28 to 31 March 2016 with the participation of various stakeholders.

In April 2016, the President of the Economic and Social Council organized a system-wide dialogue on the support provided by the United Nations system for the implementation of the Programme of Action. The United Nations system was fully involved in supporting the Midterm Review through the inter-agency consultative group mechanism. Three inter-agency meetings took place.

Before and during the Review, dedicated events for stakeholders were organized. On 26 May, the Government of Turkey and the Office of the High Representative, in cooperation with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies, organized a private sector forum on investment opportunities in the least developed countries. The forum provided a platform for discussion of the constraints and support needs of the least developed countries in their effort to promote additional investment, including through highlighting lessons learned and best practices.

On 28 May, a parliamentary parallel event was co-organized by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Office of the High Representative, at which participants discussed the contribution of national parliaments to the

[1] Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, "Lessons learned from five years of implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries" (2016), available from http://www.ipoareview.org/lessons-learned/.

implementation of the Programme of Action and explored ways to strengthen it further. The event alsc identified accomplishments, lessons learned and challenges faced by parliaments in promoting the objectives of the Programme of Action and provided a platform for parliamentarians to share their experiences and develop strategies to promote parliamentary action in its implementation.

A civil society forum was held from 26 to 28 May, organized by LDC Watch in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative. The forum assessed the status of implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action from the perspective of civil society in the least developed countries, especially with regard to the progress made towards meeting the graduation criteria and the challenges related to graduation of the least developed countries.

A United Nations system high-level event was also held during the Midterm Review on 29 May, with a view to ensuring the full mobilization of the United Nations system in support of the least developed countries and coordinated and timely implementation by the United Nations system of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the outcome of the Review. At that meeting a "mainstreaming toolkit" was launched, which aims to support the ongoing efforts of the organizations of the United Nations system in effectively mainstreaming the provisions of the Programme of Action into their work programmes.

Chapter I

Resolutions adopted by the Midterm Review

Political declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

1. We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives participating in the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, are gathered here in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016 to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, to share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered and actions and initiatives needed to overcome them, as well as new challenges and emerging issues, to reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the least developed countries made in Istanbul, Turkey, and to further strengthen the global partnership for development for the least developed countries in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action in order to ensure the timely, effective and full implementation of the Programme of Action during the remainder of the decade, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, supports and complements it and helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, the Paris Agreement adopted by parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

2. We recognize the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review as an opportunity to highlight the concrete measures, initiatives, partnerships and actions that various stakeholders have undertaken to date to support the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to launch other concrete measures, initiatives and partnerships, individually or collectively, that have the potential to further progress the implementation of the Programme of Action, building on the momentum of recent and relevant United Nations meetings, agendas and conferences and the decisions adopted therein.

3. We recognize that over the past few decades the world has witnessed remarkable socioeconomic progress, with most of the Millennium Development Goals and targets achieved globally. However, not all countries have fully shared in this global progress. Performances among the least developed countries were mixed. The majority of the least developed countries, which constitute the poorest and most vulnerable group of countries, were not able to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless, many of the least developed countries have adopted stronger policies, strengthened governance and achieved substantial gains in reducing the prevalence of extreme poverty and improved health and education outcomes. Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals was slowest in the least developed countries in conflict and post-conflict situations; those countries require context-specific approaches, including targeted national policies and international support.

4. We recognize that, despite the many challenges and constraints, the least developed countries represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare, prosperity and food and energy security. Therefore, a strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of the least developed countries, including children, young people and women, will contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity, poverty eradication and sustainable development for all.

5. We reaffirm our commitment to the full, effective and timely implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We also reaffirm our commitment to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our support for mainstreaming it into the national development policies and programmes of the least developed countries. We also reaffirm our determination to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development, in a spirit of global solidarity, focused in particular on the eradication of poverty and promotion of inclusive growth and the implementation of social protection systems, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable.

I. State of progress and lessons learned in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

6. We note that many of the least developed countries have made considerable progress in achieving positive and sustainable development outcomes, in spite of significant challenges and constraints. For many of them, growth performance and prospects have been good on a sustained basis. Most of the least developed countries have significantly increased domestic resource mobilization and use for sustainable development. National ownership and leadership at the country level is essential for sustained progress in all priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

7. We are concerned that, in the context of the overall slowdown in the international economy, the least developed countries as a group are experiencing a slowdown of their economies, with growth rates falling from 5.1 per cent in 2014 to an estimated 4.5 per cent in 2015,[2] which is significantly lower than the growth rate achieved during 2001-2010 and falls far short of the Sustainable Development Goal target of at least 7 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth per annum in the near term, and those that are highly dependent on commodity exports have seen a pronounced decline in their export earnings and GDP growth.

8. We recognize that many of the least developed countries continue to face multiple structural challenges and constraints, including, inter alia, narrow production and export bases, stagnant trade and investment flows, diminishing productivity growth, weak land and natural resource governance, and widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition. These long-standing challenges are compounded by new and emerging challenges, such as climate change, increased incidences of natural disasters and public health emergencies, conflicts, declining commodity prices and rising capital outflows. Without a structural transformation that tackles institutional and capacity constraints, the least developed countries will remain vulnerable to various economic, social and environmental shocks.

[2] *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2016* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.II.C.2).

9. Continued robust external support, including through official development assistance (ODA), is necessary to complement domestic resources and national policies and programmes to effectively assist each of the least developed countries in addressing these important issues. We recognize the important contribution of the existing preferences extended to the least developed countries.

10. We recognize that swift action in areas related to productive capacity, infrastructure and energy, agriculture, food security and nutrition and rural development, economy, trade and investment, good governance at all levels, human development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, financing for development, science, technology and innovation, migration and remittances, and resilience building are necessary to realize the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promise of leaving no one behind.

General objectives, goals and targets

11. We recognize that, while the least developed countries have made significant efforts towards achieving the objectives, goals and targets of the Istanbul Programme of Action, a lot still remains to be done by them and their development partners. There is a need to foster progress across all sectors. We reaffirm our commitment to give special attention to the least developed countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Graduation

12. We congratulate those countries that have graduated from least developed country status and welcome the fact that many of the least developed countries are meeting the criteria for graduation and many others have expressed their aspirations to graduate. We note with concern that, since the least developed country category was established in 1971, only four countries have officially graduated. Based on current trends, concerted and revitalized efforts will be required to enable half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020, as foreseen in the Istanbul Programme of Action. Particular attention should be given to the smooth transition of countries graduating from least developed country status, consistent with their transition strategy, taking into account each country's particular development situation.

Productive capacity

13. We recognize that increasing productive capacity leads to inclusive economic growth and social development and is vital to the achievement of sustainable development and for building resilience. During the past five years, limited progress was achieved in production diversification and value addition as well as in the effective participation of the least developed countries in regional and global value chains, which are critical for those countries in reversing their marginalization, building productive capacities, accelerating structural transformation and generating full and productive employment and decent work for all with quick impact on poverty eradication. This situation requires strategic policy interventions at the subnational, national, regional and international levels, as well as at the sectoral level. In this regard, regional cooperation and integration can play a catalytic role.

Infrastructure and energy

14. We stress that the development of sustainable and resilient physical infrastructure, the promotion of sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation are important prerequisites for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. A significant amount of investment and technology development is essential, including through public-private partnerships, innovative financing and regional integration, supported by appropriate and transparent national policies, practices, institutions and regulations that foster a strong investment climate. Enhanced financial and technical support by development partners for infrastructure development and management in the least developed countries, as well as continued support for those countries' efforts to strengthen the underlying investment climate, promote science, technology and innovation, and facilitate the transfer of relevant skills, knowledge and technology for the development of infrastructure under mutually agreed terms, also remain crucial for infrastructure development in the least developed countries.

15. We emphasize that the acute energy gap faced by the least developed countries is a severe constraint on their structural transformation. Access to energy is often not provided because of lack of finance, technology, infrastructure for the generation and supply of energy, appropriate regulation and economic and technical skills. Skill development and improvement of the capacity of local enterprise to deliver good-quality products and services on an economically sustainable basis are also important to establish inclusive energy systems that also reach rural areas and the poorest part of the population. Addressing these issues will be crucial in providing access to affordable, reliable sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. Such access is a key development enabler and multiplier, which can foster private sector development, strengthen productive capacity-building, expand trade and promote access to better social services and food security. Ensuring technological progress is also key to finding lasting solutions to both economic and environmental challenges, such as providing productive employment and decent work for all and promoting energy efficiency.

Agriculture, food security and nutrition and rural development

16. We acknowledge that progress in the development of the agricultural sector and related industries, which employs more than half of the population in most of the least developed countries, is critical for sustainable development.

17. We recognize that low agricultural productivity and the availability and affordability of safe food remain major challenges in many of the least developed countries. Some 210 million people in the least developed countries, predominantly in rural areas, do not have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Moreover, the least developed countries are urbanizing rapidly, and the proportion of urban residents who experience hunger and malnutrition is growing. The agriculture sector in the least developed countries continues to be affected by structural factors such as insufficient public and private investment in physical infrastructure and in research and agricultural extension services, limited access to markets, lack of secure land tenure, particularly for smallholder farmers and women, limited capacity-building, slow progress in regulatory and policy reforms and in scientific and technological development, lack of access to financial services, including insurance, poor investment climate, inadequate support to enhance the situation of women in rural

areas, trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, and public stockholding in a manner that adversely affects food security, as well as periodic economic shocks such as price fluctuations. We note that less than 7 per cent of total ODA going to the least developed countries is allocated to agriculture. Furthermore, agriculture development has been suffering from the adverse impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, less predictable weather patterns, soil degradation, salinity intrusion, sea level rise and coastal erosion, declining water availability and degrading water quality due to the increasing frequency of droughts and floods, and soil and water contamination. We reaffirm our commitment to work together to address these challenges in the least developed countries. We also note that integrated water resource management and intersectoral approaches among water, food and energy to increase synergies and manage trade-offs are essential.

Economy, trade and investment

18. We are concerned that the growth rates of the least developed countries have fallen since 2011, and we emphasize the importance of reversing this trend. As identified in the Istanbul Programme of Action, trade and investment are major drivers of economic growth, employment generation and structural transformation. The challenge is also one of fostering inclusive growth, including through the empowerment of all women and girls and achieving gender equality, while promoting sustainable development, as the pace of reduction of poverty has not been commensurate with the economic growth rate.

19. We note some improvement in market access for products of the least developed countries in some developing countries during the past five years. We express our concern that the least developed countries' exports remained highly concentrated in a few primary products vulnerable to commodity price volatility and to exogenous economic and environmental shocks. The share of the least developed countries in world exports remained stagnant, standing in 2014 at 1.1 per cent and dropping to 0.97 per cent in 2015, a level that is far behind the objective of doubling their share of global exports by 2020, mentioned in the Istanbul Programme of Action. We acknowledge that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system is key to promoting export diversification, trade and economic growth.

20. We are concerned that the share of the least developed countries in global foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows remains virtually unchanged from 2013 at 1.9 per cent and that FDI in the least developed countries remains concentrated in a small number of mineral-rich economies. We stress that economic diversification and a positive enabling environment for investments at all levels, as well as stronger and more focused policies and measures by the least developed countries, home countries of FDI, international organizations and other stakeholders, can substantially increase FDI flows to the least developed countries in the coming years.

21. We recognize that full and productive employment and decent work for all remains a central objective of macroeconomic and fiscal policies so that the benefits of growth reach all people, especially the poor, with a focus on mutually supportive strategies that lead to the rapid expansion of productive employment in the least developed countries and optimize the contribution of women and young people to economic growth and poverty reduction.

Good governance at all levels and human development

22. We recognize that the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance, transparency, democratic participation, the rule of law at the national and international levels, human development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are essential to achieving peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the least developed countries. Since the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the least developed countries have made some progress in these areas, yet considerable efforts are still needed. Several of the least developed countries have joined the Open Government Partnership, and we welcome their commitments to making their Governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens. Forty-two of the least developed countries have become parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Substantial progress towards achieving education for all at the primary level has been made, including gender parity for one third of the least developed countries. Nearly 20 per cent of all parliamentarians in the least developed countries are women. We also recognize that the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if women and girls continue to be denied the full realization of their human rights and opportunities.

23. We recognize that qualified and skilled human resources can make important contributions to sustainable development in the least developed countries. While much progress has been made towards achieving education for all at the primary and secondary levels, much more remains to be done to ensure that the over 24 million children of primary school age not in school and the over 22 million out-of-school adolescents of lower secondary school age in the least developed countries have access to quality education. Strengthened efforts by the least developed countries and their development partners are also needed to ensure that education is of good quality and that it provides all learners with the skills needed to access employment and decent work.

24. We note that greater efforts are also needed to better engage and empower young people. They need opportunities to learn, work and participate in decision-making processes and to contribute to building inclusive and peaceful societies that are free from violence. Particular efforts are needed to ensure that all young people, including girls, enjoy access to lifelong learning opportunities and equal access to quality education at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as technical and vocational training. In this regard, we note with concern the lack of progress in closing gender gaps in access to, retention in and completion of secondary education.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

25. We recognize that further efforts are needed to remove the barriers that women and girls face regarding gender-based violence, access to safe learning environments, quality education, criminal justice systems, health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, safe drinking water and sanitation and equal rights with men to economic opportunities such as employment, decent work, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, entrepreneurship, participation in trade, access to and ownership of productive resources, including land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology. Women and girls are also more vulnerable to climate change impacts.

We must work to strengthen our attention to the full and effective participation of women and girls in decision-making at all levels as well as the elimination of discrimination, all forms of violence and harmful practices against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

26. We reaffirm that achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and the full realization of the human rights of all people are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. We reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies.

Financing for development

27. We recognize that significant additional domestic public resources, including at the subnational level, supplemented by international assistance as appropriate, will be critical to realizing sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda acknowledge the centrality of domestic resource mobilization underscored by the principle of national ownership and the important contribution of private investment, including FDI, for the achievement of sustainable development. While the least developed countries have made considerable efforts to mobilize domestic resources and attract private investment, further progress is needed.

28. We note that, as a result of cooperation between the United Nations, the Group of 20, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, there has been international progress in identifying and addressing the base erosion and profit shifting challenges for developing countries and ensuring that all countries, including the least developed countries, can take advantage of increases in tax transparency and exchange of information, such as by implementing the new international standard of automatic exchange of information.

29. We are also concerned by the impact that illicit financial flows have in draining resources away from the least developed countries. Illicit financial flows have an adverse impact on domestic resource mobilization and on the sustainability of public finances. The activities that underlie illicit financial flows, such as corruption, embezzlement, fraud, tax evasion, safe havens that create incentives for transfer of stolen assets abroad, money-laundering and illegal exploitation of natural resources, are also detrimental to development. We emphasize the importance of working together, including through increased international cooperation to stem corruption and identify, freeze and recover stolen assets and return them to their countries of origin, in a manner consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

30. We recognize that international public finance plays an important role in complementing the efforts of countries to mobilize public resources domestically. For the least developed countries as a group, ODA remains the largest source of external financing. The decline in ODA going to the least developed countries during the past years was a worrisome trend, and the level of 0.09 per cent of gross national income (GNI) attained in 2014 remained below the relevant 0.15-0.20 per cent target to which many developed countries have committed. In that context, we

note the 4 per cent real-term increase in bilateral ODA to the least developed countries in 2015 and the projection that the proportion of ODA to those countries will continue to rise in 2016-2019, suggesting that developed countries are reversing the decline in ODA to the least developed countries in line with the commitment by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development at its high-level meeting in 2014 to reverse the declining trend of ODA to the least developed countries. We note with concern that FDI to those countries has remained constant as a share of global FDI and concentrated in a few countries and sectors. We also note the growing importance of remittances.

31. We welcome the recent decision by the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund to increase access to its concessional resources by 50 per cent for the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

32. We acknowledge the debt distress and sustainability challenges faced by some of the least developed countries. We recognize that the long-term sustainability of debt of those countries depends on, inter alia, economic growth, the mobilization of domestic and international resources, the export prospects of debtor countries, sustainable debt management, sound macroeconomic policies that also support job creation, sound public financial management at all levels, transparent and effective regulatory frameworks and overcoming structural development problems.

Science, technology and innovation

33. We recognize that the Istanbul Programme of Action recommends that the least developed countries and development partners make concerted efforts to build science, technology and innovation capacity so that those countries can find and harness innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges and promote endogenous capacity for research and development to address the structural impediments to achieving sustainable development that those countries face. Despite the importance of science, technology and innovation for promoting positive development outcomes, the least developed countries have not made significant progress in this field since the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We are concerned that fewer than 7 per cent of households in the least developed countries have access to the Internet, that many of the least developed countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies and that, for the majority of the poor, the promise of science, technology and innovation remains unfulfilled, and we emphasize the need to effectively harness technology to bridge the digital divide. In this regard, we stress the growing importance of science, technology and innovation for promoting positive development outcomes, including in the least developed countries.

Resilience building

34. We are deeply concerned that, owing to significant capacity constraints, the least developed countries are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, sea level rise, coastal erosion, salinity intrusion, glacier lake outburst floods, ocean acidification, and the rise in frequency as well as impacts of natural and man-made disasters, which further threaten food security and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. We are deeply worried that an increase in global temperature, sea level rise, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts can

seriously affect coastal areas and low-lying coastal least developed countries. We are concerned that women and girls are often disproportionately affected by the impact of climate change and other environmental issues.

35. We note that the Istanbul Programme of Action highlights the vulnerability of the least developed countries to a variety of shocks and disasters, as well as climate change, and emphasize that these vulnerabilities threaten to undermine many of the development gains that those countries have made over the past decade. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 has recognized the higher vulnerability and risk levels of the least developed countries, which often exceed their capacity to respond to and recover from disasters. We reiterate that such vulnerability requires strengthened international cooperation and ensuring genuine, durable regional and international partnerships to improve their resilience. We also note the importance of adopting and implementing national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans aimed at preventing the creation of risk, reducing existing risk and strengthening economic, social, health and environmental resilience. We welcome the fact that many of the least developed countries have communicated intended nationally determined contributions and designed and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies embedded in national development plans with a focus on preventive measures and a multi-stakeholder approach. However, their efforts have had limited success so far, given their capacity and resource constraints, including at the subnational level. Although most of the least developed countries have developed some form of social protection programme, coverage tends to be very limited.

36. In this regard, we acknowledge the importance of addressing these vulnerabilities and are taking steps in various multilateral forums to build resilience to many of the multiple crises and other emerging challenges described in the Istanbul Programme of Action, such as the International Development Association Crisis Response Window of the World Bank, which helps countries to respond to natural disasters and other crises, the Least Developed Countries Fund, to which donors announced contributions amounting to $248 million during the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and initiatives of the International Monetary Fund, such as the temporary waiver of interest rates on Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust loans and the provision of grants for debt relief under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, which also play an important role in building the resilience of the least developed countries. Measures at both the national and international levels need to be enhanced to mitigate and manage risks and address the vulnerability of the least developed countries to various kinds of shocks and crises.

37. We recognize that the least developed countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and those experiencing political instability, or unable to deliver basic State services, have specific structural challenges and require context-specific approaches, including targeted national policies and international support measures to address these challenges and to support peacebuilding, State-building activities and sustainable development. We take note of the principles set out in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States by the Group of Seven Plus, countries that are, or have been, affected by conflict.

38. We note the convening of the Ministerial Conference on New Partnerships for Productive Capacity-Building in the Least Developed Countries, held in Cotonou, Benin, from 28 to 31 July 2014, the Ministerial Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries on Graduation and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in Kathmandu from 16 to 18 December 2014, and the Ministerial Meeting of the African Least Developed Countries on Structural Transformation, Graduation and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in Milan, Italy, from 8 to 10 June 2015.

II. Looking forward and recommendations

General recommendations

39. Planning at both the national and international levels is necessary to realize the concrete objectives contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action. We encourage the least developed countries to continue to integrate the Programme of Action into their national and sectorial development plans and their development partners to continue to integrate the Programme of Action into their national cooperation policy frameworks, programmes and activities, as appropriate.

40. We reiterate the principles that guide the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action: country ownership and leadership; an integrated approach; genuine partnerships; result orientation; peace and security, development and human rights; equity; voice and representation; and the balanced role of the State and market considerations.

41. We welcome the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 underscore that the most vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, deserve special attention and reflect the concerns and aspirations of the least developed countries and we recall the decision contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that effective linkages will be made with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least developed countries. We underline the importance of strong synergy in the implementation of the recently adopted agendas and the Istanbul Programme of Action at the national and subnational levels and encourage coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation.

42. We also recognize that genuine, effective and durable multi-stakeholder partnerships can play an important role in advancing sustainable development. We will encourage knowledge-sharing and the promotion of cooperation and partnerships between stakeholders, including between Governments, firms, academia and civil society, in sectors contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and in support of country-driven priorities and strategies. At the same time, we commit to pursue an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors to make the global partnership for sustainable development more effective.

43. We encourage national statistical capacities in the least developed countries to be strengthened, with the support and cooperation of the international community in order to increase significantly the use and availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by sex, age, geography, income, race, ethnicity,

migratory status, disability and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, which are necessary for efficient policymaking and an effective follow-up and review. We encourage the least developed countries to carry out a stocktaking exercise to assess current statistics and data availability for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Istanbul Programme of Action at the national and local levels, identify data gaps and build statistical capacity to ensure that data for statistics and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals are available and reliable. Development partners and relevant international organizations should, and the partnerships are encouraged to, provide international cooperation, including through technical and financial support to the least developed countries in this endeavour.

Productive capacity-building

44. We recognize the importance of building productive capacity as a critical enabler for the development and graduation of the least developed countries and call upon those countries and their development partners to ensure enhanced focus on policies and means to address productive capacity-building. We further recognize that private capital flows, in particular FDI, play a complementary and catalytic role in building and strengthening productive capacity in the least developed countries. We call upon the least developed countries to continue to strengthen the underlying investment climate and upon development partners to continue to provide enhanced financial and technical support to those countries to develop productive capacities, including for enhancing the management capacity of the least developed countries. We note that international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank provide capacity development to the least developed countries through direct technical assistance and training for country authorities and we invite them to further strengthen such support, responding to the demands and needs of those countries, within the framework of existing commitments, in accordance with their national development policies and strategies.

Graduation

45. We recall General Assembly resolutions 59/209 of 20 December 2004 and 67/221 of 21 December 2012 on a smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries. We underscore that the efforts of the least developed countries towards graduation are underpinned by their ownership and leadership, as the primary responsibility for development lies with the countries themselves, but they need to be supported by concrete and substantial international partnership measures in a spirit of mutual accountability for development results.

46. We urge both the least developed countries and their development partners to undertake more concerted and ambitious efforts to achieve the aim of the Istanbul Programme of Action of enabling half the of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. It is also important that graduation be seen not as a cut-off point, but as a resolute move towards better and sustained economic development and virtuous and inclusive structural transformation. We emphasize that a successful transition needs to be based on a national smooth transition strategy, elaborated by each graduated country. We encourage development and trading partners and the United Nations system to continue their support for the implementation of transition strategies for the least developed countries, as well as

for smooth transition for graduated countries and to avoid any abrupt reductions in either ODA or technical assistance provided to the graduated countries.

47. We invite development and trading partners to consider extending to the graduated country trade preferences previously made available as a result of least developed country status, or reducing them in a phased manner in order to avoid their abrupt reduction, on a bilateral basis.

48. We recognize the importance of the reviews by the Committee for Development Policy of the graduation criteria for the least developed countries. We recommend the reviews be comprehensive, taking into account all aspects of the evolving international development context, including relevant agendas.

Infrastructure and energy

49. We recall the goal in the Istanbul Programme of Action to increase total primary energy supply per capita in the least developed countries to the same level as in other developing countries; significantly increase the share of electricity generation through renewable energy sources by 2020; and enhance capacities in energy production, trade and distribution with the aim of ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. We recognize that financing for infrastructure and universal access to modern energy, including at the subnational level, remains a major challenge for the least developed countries.

50. We also stress that special attention should be given to the least developed countries throughout the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024), as well as within the framework of the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative and the recently held Sustainable Energy for All Forum and the Global Infrastructure Forum, with a view to ensuring the realization of the objective of access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030 and to addressing the infrastructure needs of the least developed countries.

51. We call upon the development partners to continue to support efforts by the least developed countries to develop the energy sector in generation, distribution and energy efficiency, including in renewable energy, other clean energy sources and natural gas, inter alia, through enhanced financial and technical assistance and by facilitating private sector investment, in accordance with national priorities and needs. We underline that increasing substantially the share of renewable energy in the energy mix and increasing energy efficiency can support energy access in the least developed countries. Supporting off-grid solutions for access to electricity is an effective and efficient way to improve the energy access situation of the poor. We will work to provide adequate support and facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services to the least developed countries.

52. We will embed resilient and quality infrastructure investment plans in our national sustainable development strategies, while also strengthening domestic enabling environments. We reaffirm our commitment to provide enhanced financial and technical support for infrastructure development in line with the least developed countries' sectorial and development needs and priorities and use concessional funds, where appropriate, to catalyse and leverage other sources of funding for infrastructure development and management. We will provide technical and

financial support for the least developed countries to translate plans into concrete project pipelines, as well as for individual implementable projects, including for feasibility studies, the negotiation of complex contracts and project management.

53. We recommend that all forms of finance, tools and mechanisms, including domestic resources, private finance, ODA grants and other forms of international development cooperation, public-private partnerships, concessional and non-concessional loans, blended finance, special-purpose vehicles, non-recourse project financing, risk mitigation instruments, pooled funding structures and other innovative approaches, be utilized. We invite the development finance institutions and the development partners to play a larger and more coordinated role in investing in infrastructure projects in the least developed countries, mitigating and sharing risks and ensuring guarantees.

Agriculture, food security and nutrition and rural development

54. We support the Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge and recommend increasing sustainable and responsible investment, both domestic and international, in sustainable agriculture and food security, the sustainable use of water resources, including through international public and private cooperation in rural and urban infrastructure, nutrition, secure land tenure, agricultural research and extension services, access to markets and to finance, especially for smallholder farmers, building irrigation facilities, technology development and transfer on mutually agreed terms, the promotion of resilient and sustainable agricultural practices and reducing food loss and waste. We reaffirm the commitment to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and to increase the economic benefits to the least developed countries that are small island developing States and coastal countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through the sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism by 2030.

55. We furthermore commit to supporting strong economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national, regional and local development planning, including through an integrated approach to sustainable water management and strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. We will also endeavour to increase investments for effective actions to improve people's diets and nutrition, including in emergency situations, with particular emphasis on supporting access to safe drinking water and sanitation services.

56. We recall our commitment to empower women in agriculture, including through women's access to and control over land and other productive assets.

57. We reaffirm the need to undertake necessary measures at the national and international levels to increase the agricultural productivity of the least developed countries. We take note of the existing regional frameworks on emergency food reserve mechanisms and recognize the importance of food security in emergency situations and the need for building resilience. In this regard, we invite the international community to consider enhancing such cooperation at the regional level, particularly for the least developed countries. We will continue to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of food reserve mechanisms for dealing with humanitarian food emergencies or as a means to limit price volatility in those countries. We recognize that commodity diversification and value addition as well

as the effective participation of the least developed countries in regional and global value chains and in international trade in agricultural products is a critical aspect of the efforts of those countries in reversing their marginalization, building productive capacities, accelerating structural transformation and generating full and productive employment and decent work for all with quick and sustainable impact on poverty eradication.

58. We reiterate our commitment to protect, restore and sustainably use terrestrial and water-related ecosystems, including forests, halting biodiversity loss, and tackling land and soil degradation and desertification. This would generate multiple benefits, including food security, improving the living conditions of affected populations, eradicating poverty and contributing to peace and security while enabling the least developed countries to effectively mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change. We will also promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, including efforts to reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

Trade and investment

59. We reaffirm the pre-eminence of the World Trade Organization as the global forum for the setting and governance of trade rules. We acknowledge the contribution that the rules-based multilateral trading system has made to the strength and stability of the global economy. We reaffirm the value of the World Trade Organization's consistent practice of taking decisions through a transparent, inclusive, consensus-based, member-driven process.

60. We take note of the pledge by the members of the World Trade Organization to strengthen the multilateral trading system so that it provides a strong impetus to inclusive prosperity and welfare for all members and responds to the specific development needs of developing country members, in particular the least developed country members.

61. We reaffirm our commitment to significantly increase the share of least developed countries' trade in global trade with the aim of doubling the share of least developed countries' exports in global exports by 2020, including by broadening least developed countries' export base.

62. In that regard, we urge the least developed countries and their development partners to make use of existing initiatives and programmes, such as the relevant ministerial decisions of the World Trade Organization on duty-free and quota-free market access for the least developed countries and on preferential rules of origin for those countries, as well as aid for trade. We will increase aid for trade support, in particular for the least developed countries; and we will strive to allocate an increasing proportion of aid for trade to the least developed countries, provided according to development cooperation effectiveness principles. We also welcome additional cooperation among developing countries to this end. We encourage the least developed countries to mainstream trade in their national development plans. With this in mind, we welcome the extension of the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries into phase two and, as the Enhanced Integrated Framework implements the reforms, agreed as necessary for its continuation, we urge members to contribute to the timely replenishment of the Enhanced Integrated Framework Trust Fund, for the

effective implementation, without any disruption, of the Framework between 2016 and 2023.

63. We urge World Trade Organization members to continue their efforts to accelerate the accession of all the least developed countries engaged in negotiations for World Trade Organization membership and welcome the 2012 guidelines for the accession of the least developed countries to the Organization.

64. We call upon all partners who are World Trade Organization members to implement all of the ministerial decisions, especially those that are of benefit to the least developed countries. We also call upon development partners to continue to provide concrete support to the least developed countries for the diversification of their export base, including into dynamic sectors of world trade, and in meeting the requirements of the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade to assist them in increasing their share in world trade and enhancing domestic value added for exports.

65. We reaffirm our joint commitment to promote strategic and regulatory frameworks for FDI and other resource flows to the least developed countries that include vital policy areas such as infrastructure development, trade and trade facilitation, research and development and the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms.

66. To further investment promotion, we also recommend establishing national regulatory and policy frameworks that allow businesses to innovate, invest and transform technology into employment and inclusive economic growth. We also call for greater commitment from the least developed countries and scaled-up international support for regional integration in order to expand markets, to promote trade facilitation by implementing the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, cross-border infrastructure development, regional value chains and regional cooperation, all of which will contribute to regional stability and progress. Effective partnerships between and among Governments, the private sector and civil society are particularly useful in addressing complex and interrelated challenges.

67. We recall the decision contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action and reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 67/220 of 21 December 2012 to adopt, expand and implement investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries. We welcome the decision contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries and the offer to provide financial and technical support for project preparation and contract negotiation, advisory support in investment-related dispute resolution, access to information on investment facilities and risk insurance and guarantees such as through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.

68. We recognize that stronger and more focused policies, activities and strategies by the least developed countries, the home countries of FDI, international organizations and other stakeholders, as appropriate, can help substantially increase FDI flows to the least developed countries. We encourage the least developed countries to continue to strengthen the underlying investment climate and to establish and maintain national investment promotion facilities, and we encourage development partners to continue to support capacity-building in the least developed countries aimed at improving their abilities to attract FDI.

69. In that regard, we invite the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to include the issue of investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries in the agenda of the Board, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of United Nations system support that can contribute to enhancing the flow of FDI to the least developed countries and the ability of those countries to attract such investment. We further invite the Economic and Social Council, at its next annual forum on financing for development follow-up, to discuss adopting and implementing investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, pursuant to the relevant resolutions on the matter, including General Assembly resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the mandate of the annual forum on financing for development follow-up set out therein. We recall that the forum's intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations will be fed into the overall follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

70. We call upon the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to continue to help the least developed countries attract and benefit from FDI, including through its Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development, its investment policy reviews, investment guides and other investment promotion activities. We encourage the least developed countries to make more use of those programmes and call upon development partners to continue funding them on a voluntary basis. We also invite other relevant United Nations entities and international organizations to continue their support to the least developed countries in the area of investment promotion, as appropriate and in line with their respective mandates.

71. The least developed countries are also encouraged to utilize existing trade and investment support mechanisms. The World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development offer several such programmes that address risk insurance and guarantees as well as technical and advisory support for investment-related negotiations and dispute resolution.

Good governance at all levels

72. We recall the objective of Istanbul Programme of Action of enhancing good governance at all levels, by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; protecting and promoting human rights; and reducing corruption, and strengthening least developed country Governments' capacity to play an effective role in their economic and social development. Furthering participation, empowering civil society, youth and women, and strengthening collective action will contribute to the eradication of poverty and achieving sustainable development. In that context, we encourage broad participation by the least developed countries in partnerships and other international conventions and initiatives, as appropriate, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. We also take note of the work of the Open Government Partnership. We further call upon the least developed countries that have not yet done so to make domestic legislation consistent with their particular obligations as members of or States parties to all relevant international agreements.

73. We recognize that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. In this regard, we acknowledge that the development challenges posed by conflict not only impede, but can reverse decades of development gains. We thus call upon the least developed countries, with the support of development partners, as appropriate, to build the resilience necessary to address the root causes of conflict in their countries and regions. We call upon the international community to support least developed countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and in particular those suffering from internal and cross-border violence, especially the threat of violent extremism and international terrorism, with the view of achieving the realization of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. We will also take measures to ensure that women have a role in peacebuilding and State-building.

Human and social development, children and youth

74. We acknowledge that high-quality education and skills development provide the foundation for lifelong learning and broader human development. We therefore support the global commitment to provide high-quality education to all in the least developed countries, including the poorest and most vulnerable, to the end of secondary school, and reaffirm the commitment to enhance technical, vocational and tertiary education and training, ensuring gender equality in access. We also reaffirm that investment in human resources and institutional capacities are required to ensure a diversified and resilient economy, based on a wide range of sectors, to reduce the economic volatility of countries and enable countries to reap the demographic dividend. Technical, vocational and skills development programmes need to take into account the needs of local firms and generate skilled human resources, which can also help firms to invest in the necessary technologies for advancing in the value chain. We will continue our efforts to make further progress in ensuring gender balance in enrolment in and completion of secondary and tertiary education. In this regard, we reiterate our call to development partners to continue to provide and encourage, as appropriate, higher education institutes to allocate scholarships and placements for students and trainees from the least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, technology, business management and economics.

75. We recognize that today's generation of people under the age of 25 is the largest ever in history. Girls and boys, young women and young men, are key agents of change in creating a better future, and when empowered, they have great potential to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities. We will promote and protect the rights of children and youth, ensure more opportunities for their meaningful participation, and work towards ending all forms of violence and abuse against children and youth, including exploitation, trafficking, torture and other harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. We call upon all countries to promote the engagement of children and youth as active members of the global community, now and later in life, and to ensure that no one is left behind. We call upon the least developed countries to develop policies and programmes for supporting youth access to secondary and higher education, vocational training and productive employment and health-care services, especially for young women and girls. We call upon development partners to provide financial and technical assistance to support formal and non-formal

education systems, policies and programmes in the least developed countries that provide economic opportunities and productive employment to youth, and to promote youth exchange programmes, including through virtual campuses and other networking mechanisms.

76. To enable all people to benefit from growth, we will include full and productive employment and decent work for all as a central objective in our national development strategies.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

77. We reaffirm the essential role of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights, and of full and productive employment and decent work in achieving sustainable development. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to high-quality education, health, including sexual and reproductive health, access to finance and economic opportunities and resources and political participation, as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment and decent work, leadership and decision-making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in the investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions, including criminal and civil justice systems, in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels. We will continue supporting the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including through the engagement of men and boys.

Financing for development

78. We recognize the efforts of the least developed countries to enhance domestic resource generation, and we commit to supporting efforts by the least developed countries to enhance their revenue mobilization, economic growth, product diversification and domestic value addition; to broadening the tax base and continuing efforts to integrate the informal sector into the formal economy in line with country circumstances; and to enhancing revenue administration through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policy and more efficient tax collection and administration. We are committed to reducing corruption and increasing transparency at all levels. We reaffirm our commitment to work to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030 in order to help the least developed countries to mobilize resources.

79. We reiterate that an important use of international public finance, including ODA, is to catalyse additional resource mobilization from other sources, public and private. In this regard, we take note of such efforts as the Addis Tax Initiative. We also take note of the "platform for collaboration on tax" prepared by the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations and the World Bank Group.

80. We welcome the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, including its subcommittees.

81. We recognize that private business activity, investment and innovation are major drivers of productivity, inclusive economic growth and job creation, and that private international capital flows, particularly FDI, along with a stable international financial system, are vital complements to national development efforts.

82. We reiterate that the fulfilment of all ODA commitments remains crucial. ODA providers reaffirm their respective ODA commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries. We are encouraged by those few countries that have met or surpassed their commitment to 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA and the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries. We urge all others to step up efforts to increase their ODA and to make additional concrete efforts towards the ODA targets. We welcome the decision by the European Union which reaffirms its collective commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and undertakes to meet collectively the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries in the short term and to reach 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda. We encourage ODA providers to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of GNI for ODA to the least developed countries.

83. We are encouraged by those who are allocating at least 50 per cent of their ODA to the least developed countries.

84. We stress the need for the international community to remain vigilant in monitoring the debt situation of the least developed countries and to continue to take effective measures, preferably within existing frameworks, when applicable, to address the debt problem of those countries, including through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate, for the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by the least developed countries to creditors, both public and private. We reiterate our commitment to work through existing initiatives, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. We reaffirm the importance of transparency in debt management.

85. We recognize the significant potential of multilateral development banks and other international development banks in financing sustainable development and providing know-how.

86. We encourage the least developed countries, with support from the international community, to develop their capacities to track financial transactions, administer taxation, facilitate customs services and investigate and prosecute offences to contribute to the success of efforts to deal with illicit financial flows. We also encourage international cooperation on tax matters.

87. We encourage the use of and improved access to innovative tools, such as mobile banking, payment platforms and digitalized payments, as appropriate, including by women and micro-businesses, and we recognize the role that this can play in promoting financial inclusion, as well as in reducing costs, increasing transparency, improving the speed and security of payments and opening up new markets.

88. We call for support for those partnerships and global alliances, such as the Better Than Cash Alliance and its institutional secretariat, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, that expand the reach and adoption of such tools in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Istanbul Programme of Action.

89. We welcome continued efforts to improve the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation and other international efforts in public finance, including adherence to agreed development cooperation effectiveness principles. We will align activities with national priorities, including by reducing fragmentation, accelerating the untying of aid, particularly for the least developed countries and countries most in need. We will promote country ownership and results orientation and strengthen country systems, use programme-based approaches where appropriate, strengthen partnerships for development, reduce transaction costs and increase transparency and mutual accountability. We will make development more effective and predictable by providing the least developed countries with regular and timely indicative information on planned support in the medium term.

90. We commit to pursuing policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors in support of these actions.

South-South and triangular cooperation

91. We recall that South-South cooperation plays an important role in the development of the least developed countries through its contribution to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

92. South-South cooperation is an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation. We recognize its increased importance, different history and particularities and stress that South-South cooperation should be seen as an expression of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South, based on their shared experiences and objectives. It should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

93. We welcome the increased contributions of South-South cooperation to poverty eradication and sustainable development. We encourage developing countries to voluntarily step up their efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation and to further improve its development effectiveness in accordance with the provisions of the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. We also commit to strengthening triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise to bear in development cooperation.

Migration and remittances

94. We recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. We also recognize that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. We will cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. We underline the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship, and recall that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received.

95. We will work towards reducing the average transaction cost of migrant remittances by 2030 to less than 3 per cent of the amount transferred. We are particularly concerned with the cost of remittances in certain low-volume and high-cost corridors. We will work to ensure that no remittance corridor requires charges higher than 5 per cent by 2030, mindful of the need to maintain adequate service coverage, especially for those most in need.

96. We recognize that remittances from migrant workers are typically wages transferred to families, primarily to meet part of the needs of the recipient households, and cannot be equated to other international financial flows. We will work to ensure that adequate and affordable financial services are available to migrants and their families in both home and host countries. Combining remittance receipts with broader access to other financial services can increase the impact of remittances on growth by facilitating savings and investments. We will take measures to promote the productive investment of remittances, such as in micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and ensure that women and men are engaged as equal partners and beneficiaries.

97. We will support national authorities to address the most significant obstacles to the continued flow of remittances, such as the trend of banks withdrawing services, to work towards access to remittance transfer services across borders. We will increase coordination among national regulatory authorities to remove obstacles to non-bank remittance service providers accessing payment system infrastructure and promote conditions for cheaper, faster and safer transfer of remittances in both source and recipient countries, including by promoting competitive and transparent market conditions.

Science, technology and innovation

98. We reaffirm our commitment to support efforts by the least developed countries to improve their capacity to develop, access and utilize critical technologies. We acknowledge that an enabling environment and relevant legal frameworks can give firms confidence to invest in advanced technologies and establish research partnerships in the least developed countries and to provide incentives for local firms to develop or adapt their own technologies. We encourage the least developed countries, with support from the international community, to enhance investment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and enhance technical, vocational and tertiary education and training and to ensure equal access for women and girls and encourage their participation therein. We also encourage development partners to enhance support for efforts by the least developed countries to create a successful environment for developing, attracting and utilizing new technologies and building domestic capacity and a knowledge base, including through financial and technical assistance and the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms.

99. We reaffirm our commitment to fully operationalize the technology bank for the least developed countries, in view of its potential to foster productive capacity, structural transformation, poverty eradication and sustainable development. In this regard, we take note of General Assembly resolution 70/216 of 22 December 2015, in which the Assembly outlined the steps necessary to launch and operationalize the technology bank, funded by voluntary contributions, by 2017 and to ensure continued support for the technology bank from all relevant stakeholders. We will

avoid duplication and promote synergies between the bank and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism established in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and close cooperation on both technical and administrative matters with the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. We welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of the members of the Governing Council of the technology bank and the establishment of a trust fund with the flexibility necessary to attract voluntary funding from Member States and other stakeholders. We emphasize that additional details about, inter alia, the specific activities the technology bank will undertake and how those activities will be evaluated, will help to mobilize voluntary assistance. We invite the Governing Council, with the assistance of appropriate technical experts, as needed, and in consultation with Member States, as appropriate, to draft a legal charter to be adopted by the General Assembly before the end of 2016 and to elaborate other detailed operational and policy documents necessary for the operationalization and sustainable functioning of the technology bank.

100. We stress that generous and sustained support will be crucial to ensure the success of the technology bank. We welcome the fact that Turkey will host the technology bank for the least developed countries in Gebze, and we call upon the Government of Turkey to continue its support for the bank. We urge developed and developing country partners, as well as international organizations, foundations and the private sector, to provide voluntary financial and technical assistance to the technology bank to ensure its effective operation.

101. We recognize the importance of ensuring access for poor and excluded households and localities to adapted technologies that can facilitate entry to new markets and provide renewable energy sources, waste management and clean water.

Resilience-building

102. We emphasize that building resilience at the national level, as well as the subnational, community and individual levels, is critical to sustaining hard-won development gains and accelerating progress towards achieving the development aspirations set in the Istanbul Programme of Action. More investment in the capacities and institutions of local authorities, the building of livelihoods, inclusive and rapid growth, disaster preparedness, the application of information and communications technologies and science and technology, social protection and good governance will contribute to strengthening resilience in an effective manner.

103. We welcome the Paris Agreement, in which parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change established the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and recognized that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of those developing country parties to the Framework Convention that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

104. We welcome the fact that the Paris Agreement can play an important role in the transformation to low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient societies and help to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of those developing country parties to the Framework Convention that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

105. We call for effective delivery on climate change commitments and access for the least developed countries to all relevant climate change-related funds, as applicable.

106. We welcome the decisions of the Board of the Green Climate Fund to aim for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation over time on a grant equivalent basis and a floor of 50 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries. We welcome the recent pledges to the Least Developed Countries Fund at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and call upon the developed countries to continue to provide support to vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, to address their adaptation needs. We encourage other parties to the Framework Convention to provide or continue to provide such support voluntarily.

107. We stress the importance of developing and implementing holistic disaster risk reduction strategies integrated at all levels in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and of supporting national and local capacity for disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery and rehabilitation. In this regard, we call for the continuation of the work in relevant institutions to support efforts by the least developed countries to build their national capacity to respond to various kinds of shocks, including through funds and other tools.

108. We urge both development partners and the least developed countries to make full use of various context-specific programmes and instruments that are already in place. In some instances, resilience programmes may require country-level pooled funding mechanisms that provide assistance and reduce transaction costs for a particular least developed country.

109. We underline the need to reduce the vulnerability of the least developed countries to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, as well as climate change, and to enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges by strengthening their resilience, and in this regard stress that it is important that all countries and other actors work together to further develop and implement concrete measures on an urgent basis at the national and international levels so as to build the resilience of the least developed countries to withstand economic shocks and mitigate their adverse effects, to withstand and overcome the adverse effects of climate change, to enhance sustainable growth and protect biodiversity and to withstand natural hazards in order to reduce the risk of disasters, as agreed upon in the Istanbul Programme of Action.

110. We renew our resolve to fulfil our commitments to further implement the Istanbul Programme of Action, and we underscore the urgency of finding additional solutions to the major challenges facing the least developed countries in a concerted manner. We recognize that the way forward for crisis mitigation and resilience-building requires that coordinated, balanced and integrated actions be taken at all levels, including through the strengthening of existing initiatives, with the aim of building the resilience of the least developed countries in overcoming their vulnerabilities.

111. We decide to undertake an in-depth analysis on crisis mitigation and resilience-building for the least developed countries, at the national and

international levels, with a view to building and further strengthening crisis mitigation and resilience in the least developed countries, and we request the General Assembly to determine the parameters of this analysis at its seventy-first session.

112. We stress the importance of working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding to promote social cohesion and of empowering the least developed countries to become inclusive and resilient to external and internal shocks that could result in new cycles of violence. Conflict prevention measures with adequate early warning and risk assessment tools can assist in avoiding or at least mitigating adverse impacts of shocks. We express our commitment to take early action to prevent extreme violence and armed conflict by supporting and strengthening core governance institutions, strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention and management of ongoing tensions with civil society and marginalized communities, including women and youth, facilitating dialogue and consensus-building, and mainstreaming conflict prevention and early warning in development within the United Nations system through conflict analysis and assessment.

113. We note that women and girls, especially those belonging to the poorest segments of society, are among those who are affected disproportionately during and in the aftermath of crises and disasters. We reaffirm our commitment to put in place gender-responsive policies and actions to address crises and disasters, including by ensuring women's full, equal and effective participation and leadership in decision-making, building their capacity for preparedness and resilient livelihoods.

United Nations system support

114. We reiterate that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should continue to fulfil its functions to assist the Secretary-General in the effective follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system, with a view to facilitating the coordinated implementation of and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action at the country, regional and global levels, and should continue to assist in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action. To this end, it should continue its awareness-raising and advocacy work in favour of the least developed countries, in partnership with the relevant parts of the United Nations system, as well as with parliaments, civil society, the media, academia and foundations, and should continue to provide appropriate support to group consultations of least developed countries.

115. We reiterate our request to the Secretary-General to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all parts of the United Nations system to facilitate coordinated implementation and coherence in the follow-up and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. The coordination mechanisms available, such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group, should be broadly utilized and the inter-agency consultative group should be kept active in this regard.

116. We reiterate the importance of effective linkages in the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries.

117. We reiterate our invitation to the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and other multilateral organizations and international financial institutions to contribute to implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action and to integrate it into their work programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates. These organizations are invited to participate fully in reviews of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. We are concerned that the share of expenditure for the operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the least developed countries is declining. We invite the governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations development system and other multilateral organizations to prioritize allocations to the least developed countries, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates.

118. We reiterate that treating the least developed countries as a group on the basis of their low per capita income, human asset development and economic vulnerability remains the fundamental premise for special measures in their favour, and that wider recognition of least developed country status could stimulate and facilitate better integration of the Istanbul Programme of Action into development policies. We invite the Committee for Development Policy to look into the reasons and consequences of the non-application of the least developed country category by some United Nations development system organizations and to include its findings on this matter in its annual report to the Economic and Social Council.

119. We recommit to the broadening and strengthening of the voice and participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making and norm-setting and in global economic governance. We invite the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and the other main international regulatory standard-setting bodies to continue efforts to increase the voice of developing countries in norm-setting processes to ensure that their concerns are taken into consideration. We reiterate that more effective representation of the least developed countries in decision-making at the global level could improve the international environment for the development of the least developed countries. We also reiterate that the international economic system and architecture should be inclusive and responsive to the special development needs of the least developed countries, ensuring their effective participation, voice and representation at all levels.

Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

120. We encourage the General Assembly to consider holding the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2021.

Expression of thanks to the people and the Government of Turkey

The Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020,

Having met in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016, at the invitation of the Government of Turkey,

1. *Expresses its deep appreciation* to His Excellency Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey, for his outstanding contribution as President of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, to the successful outcome of the Midterm Review;

2. *Expresses its profound gratitude* to the Government of Turkey for having made it possible for the Midterm Review to be held in Turkey and for the excellent facilities, staff and services so graciously placed at its disposal;

3. *Requests* the Government of Turkey to convey to the city of Antalya and to the people of Turkey the gratitude of the Midterm Review for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to the participants.

Chapter II
Organization of work and other organizational matters

A. Date and place of the Midterm Review

1. The Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 was held in Antalya, Turkey, from 27 to 29 May 2016, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 69/231 of 19 December 2014, 70/216 of 22 December 2015 and 70/261 of 15 April 2016. Pursuant to resolution 69/231, the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and the supplementary arrangements established for the Commission on Sustainable Development by the Council in its decisions 1993/215 of 12 February 1993 and 1995/201 of 8 February 1995, applied. During that period, the Midterm Review held six plenary meetings and four round tables.

B. Attendance

2. The list of participants in the Midterm Review will be issued in document A/CONF.228/L.4.

C. Opening of the Midterm Review

3. The Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action was opened on 27 May 2016 by the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as the Secretary-General of the Midterm Review.

4. At the opening of its first plenary meeting on 27 May, statements were made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, President of the Conference; the President of the General Assembly; the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the Senior Minister for Planning and Development and Special Envoy of the President of Benin and former Chair of the Least Developed Countries Group, Abdoulaye Bio Tchané; the Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives in Bangladesh and current Chair of the Least Developed Countries Group, Khandker Mosharraf Hossain; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad, Moussa Faki Mahamat; the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development representing the President of the European Commission, Neven Mimica; the Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of the World Bank, representing the President of the World Bank Group, Sri Mulyani Indrawati; the International Coordinator of LDC Watch, representing civil society, Gauri Pradhan; and the President of the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey, representing the private sector, Ömer Cihad Vardan.

D. Election of the President

5. At its first plenary meeting, the Midterm Review elected by acclamation the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, as President of the Midterm Review.

E. Election of other officers

6. At the same meeting, the Midterm Review elected the following officers:

Ex officio Vice-President: Turkey

Vice-Presidents: Argentina, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Georgia, Hungary, Malawi, Nepal and Yemen

Rapporteur: Durga Prasad Bhattarai (Nepal)

F. Adoption of the agenda

7. Also at its first plenary meeting, the Midterm Review adopted the agenda as contained in document A/CONF.228/1. The agenda read as follows:

1. Opening of the Midterm Review.
2. Election of the President.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Organization of work.
5. Election of other officers.
6. Review of the implementation: general exchange of views.
7. Thematic round-table meetings.
8. Adoption of the political declaration.
9. Adoption of the report of the Midterm Review.
10. Closure of the Midterm Review.

G. Documentation

8. The list of documents before the Midterm Review is contained in annex I to the present report.

H. Special and side events

9. Twenty-five side events (a full list is contained in annex II to the present report) were organized by Member States, United Nations agencies, financial institutions and civil society organizations, focusing on the priority areas for action set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action. Attended by high-level officials, including ministers, heads of United Nations agencies, ambassadors, other senior government officials and renowned experts, the events provided an opportunity for partners to discuss lessons learnt and propose options to intensify action at all levels to accelerate progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action over the remaining five years.

10. There was a common understanding that the success of the Sustainable Development Goals will be determined by the success of the least developed

countries and participants agreed that the least developed countries should not be left behind. A publication entitled "From the Istanbul Programme of Action to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which provides a detailed account of the complementarities between the two agendas, was launched. In the same vein, comparisons were drawn between Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda, noting that 34 of the 48 least developed countries are in Africa and any action on sustainable development should take into consideration the human and economic conditions in Africa. A recommendation was made to develop a toolkit that would help countries integrate all agendas into their national plans.

11. During the events, emphasis was laid on the need for greater mobilization of resources, including through new and innovative sources of financing to meet the development needs of the least developed countries. A publication on "Financing for the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries" was launched at one of the events. It emphasizes that domestic resources and ODA combined will be insufficient to finance the 2030 Agenda and therefore the least developed countries will need to harness and make effective use of a broader suite of financing instruments.

12. In the context of domestic resource mobilization, concern was raised over illicit tax flows and a call was made for tax justice to be achieved by eliminating illicit flows and making tax reporting transparent and accountable. With respect to strengthening support for the least developed countries, a number of tools are available, including the International Survey on Revenue Administration, the fiscal analysis of resource industries framework, the tax administration diagnostic assessment tool, the tax policy assessment framework and the revenue administration gap analysis programme.

13. In addition, the side events highlighted the critical importance of fostering productive capacities and structural economic transformation in the least developed countries. Pledges were made to assist them with mainstreaming trade into their respective national policies and strategies and strengthen the link between trade and poverty reduction. A commitment to developing a policy manual to assist them in improving their policymaking and implementation capacities, to enable them to meet the relevant objectives of the Programme of Action by 2020, was announced. A recommendation was made to speed up the establishment of the technology bank for the least developed countries to promote structural transformation.

14. To enhance the productive capacities of the least developed countries, a new strategy to enhance youth employability, entitled "Inclusive development and entrepreneurship for all", was launched. It was noted that the least developed countries were making considerable progress in investing in education. Going forward, they would also need to create a strategic profile of the needs for future skills and would require investment in high-quality education at all levels and to adapt to the current global revolution in information and communications technology (ICT).

15. On support measures for a smooth transition from the least developed country category, new toolkits, including a graduation diagnostic toolkit, specific to each country are currently under development. A commitment was made to support the development of smooth transition strategies for countries that will meet the graduation threshold. The importance of reducing the vulnerabilities of the least

developed countries in making progress towards graduation and during the transition phase was stressed.

16. Financial pledges were made by development partners to allocate more targeted support for the least developed countries, including a strategy to allocate more Aid for Trade to them. Furthermore, a financial commitment was made for the design of a targeted investment support programme to respond to their need for support in contract negotiations and dispute settlement. The programme will aim to provide advice on investment contract negotiations and dispute settlement to requesting least developed country Governments through arranging for legal and, when necessary, multi-disciplinary teams to assist them in preparing for and conducting negotiations and participating in investment-related dispute settlement proceedings.

I. Parliamentary parallel event

17. Parliamentarians from around the world, gathered at the Midterm Review, reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and their determination to take account of it in national laws and in regional parliamentary forums.

18. It was recognized that addressing the challenges of the least developed countries, including, inter alia, narrow production and export bases, stagnant trade and investment flows, diminishing productivity growth, weak governance of land and natural resources, widespread poverty, hunger and malnutrition, climate change, the increased incidence of natural disasters and public health emergencies, conflicts, declining commodity prices and rising capital outflows, requires enhanced and continued external support, including through increased ODA. Several members of parliament stressed that democracy is both a set of values and a system of institutions that puts those values into practice. At the most fundamental level, everyone has the right to be heard and all voices carry equal weight. The primary responsibility of parliamentarians is to serve the people and deliver policies and legislation that address their needs and interests.

19. Members of parliament are deeply engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance, transparency, democratic participation, rule of law at national and international levels, human development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which are essential to achieving peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the least developed countries.

20. Several of the least developed countries have joined the Open Government Partnership and their commitment to making their Governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens was welcome. Forty-two of the least developed countries have become parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Substantial progress towards achieving education for all at the primary level has been made, including gender parity for one third of the least developed countries. Nearly 20 per cent of all parliamentarians in the least developed countries are women. It was also stated that the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if women and girls continue to be denied the full realization of their human rights and opportunities.

21. Working groups should be established in the parliaments, especially in those of development partners, to ensure that progress on the Programme of Action and the results of the Midterm Review are monitored.

22. An interparliamentary cooperation mechanism should be established to follow the results of the improvements in the least developed countries and to support the implementation of the Programme of Action.

23. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey has been supporting the parliaments and staff of the least developed countries for many years. On a side note, the Assembly has committed to continue supplying technical support with regard to training, assisting and sharing experiences, as requested by the parliaments of the least developed countries.

24. Twinning projects should be established, especially on education, to strengthen cooperation between the countries.

J. Civil society forum

25. The civil society forum attracted representatives of 160 organizations from 69 countries, representing women's movements, youth movements, trade unions, research institutions, rural development organizations, the media and human rights defenders.

26. The official opening of the forum took place on 26 May 2016 at the Titanic Belek Hotel. The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and Secretary-General of the Midterm Review, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ali Naci Koru, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Bénédicte Frankinet, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Masud Bin Momen, and the International Coordinator of LDC Watch, Gauri Pradhan, delivered remarks at the opening.

27. Civil society organizations stressed the need to address the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to achieve the objectives contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action and called for support for those countries that have been undergoing protracted political transitions after internal conflicts, natural disasters and severe economic crises in order to build lasting peace and to foster just and equitable societies. Civil society representatives also called for the immediate formulation and speedy implementation of effective support measures for building resilience, improving health and protecting food and water sovereignty, ecosystems and biodiversity. The forum also requested Governments to ensure sustainable livelihoods and to uphold human rights and gender equality, and demanded preferential treatment for the least developed countries to ensure fair trade and debt cancellation and real and substantive increases in ODA, which would guarantee effective and sustainable development and make possible the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries.

28. At the conclusion of the forum, the International Coordinator of LDC Watch handed over a civil society declaration to the Secretary-General of the Conference, which is contained in annex III to the present report.

K. Private sector forum

29. A private sector forum on investment opportunities in the least developed countries was convened on 26 May on the eve of the Midterm Review. The forum was hosted by the Government of Turkey and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, in cooperation with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies. The one-day forum brought together about 300 participants and speakers from the least developed countries, investment promotion agencies, the private sector, financial institutions and investors. The forum highlighted the challenges that the least developed countries face in attracting sustainable foreign direct investment and the opportunities that exist in those countries. The experiences of the national investment promotion agencies in those countries pointed to the need to be proactive, seek to add value and integrate better into global value chains, as well as improve coherence and creativity in country branding. The role of public finance, including the important role of ODA in leveraging additional private finance, was also highlighted.

30. The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States stressed that improving the business climate and providing a transparent regulatory environment remained key objectives for the least developed countries and at the same time their development partners and their investment promotion agencies could very usefully provide specific support to their counterparts in the least developed countries. The Chief Executive Officer of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies, Bostjan Skalar, spoke of the need for investment agencies to come together and focus on serving investors efficiently. He stressed that 60 per cent of new investment came from foreign investors already present in the countries concerned and that therefore, investment agencies should focus on improving after-care services. He also emphasized that many investment promotion agencies were beginning to understand the importance of sustainable investments, a trend that the Association strongly advocated.

31. Many speakers emphasized the importance of international support to increase the flow of sustainable investment to the least developed countries, in order to realize the aspiration of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. The need to ensure inclusive growth and increase the focus on small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs was a main theme in the discussion. The role that vocational training could play in providing practical and context-driven solutions was also highlighted. The importance of better alignment and coordination between trade and investment policy at the national level was also underscored. The need for a conducive environment at the national level in the least developed countries, based on good governance and political leadership to encourage foreign direct investment, was highlighted, including by means of autonomous and empowered investment promotion agencies. Finally, many speakers stressed the need for enhanced corporate social responsibility from investors in the least developed countries.

Chapter III
Review of the implementation: general exchange of views

32. In the course of its consideration of agenda item 6, "Review of the implementation: general exchange of views", the Midterm Review heard statements made by representatives from 76 Member States, 10 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and 4 intergovernmental organizations. It heard addresses by the Vice-President of Liberia, Joseph Boakai; the Vice-President of Ghana, Kwesi Bekoe Amissah-Arthur; and the Prime Minister of Namibia, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila. Statements were made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Kamal Thapa; the Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, Ziad Abu Amr; the Deputy Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Manasseh Maelanga; the Deputy Prime Minister of Lesotho, Mothetjoa Metsing; the Minister for Public Administration of Sweden, Ardalan Shekarabi; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan, Lyonpo Damcho Dorji; the Speaker of the Parliament of Tuvalu, Otinielu Tauteleimalae Tausi; the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, Samura Kamara; the Minister of Industry and Trade of Mozambique, Ernesto Max Tonela; the State Minister and Minister of Transportation of the Niger, Omar Hamidou Tchiana; the Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Status of Algeria, Mounia Meslem Amer; the Minister for External Relations of Cameroon, Lejeune Mbella Mbella; the Minister of Public Works and Highways of Yemen, Wahy Taha Abdullah Aman; the Minister of International Cooperation of the Sudan, Kamal Aldeen Hasan Ali; the Minister of Youth of Senegal, Mame Mbaye Niang; the Minister of State for Presidential Projects, Land Management and Equipment of Madagascar, Rafidimanana Narson; the National Planning Commissioner of Ethiopia, Yinager Dessie Belay; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, Mario Giro; the Vice-Minister of Planning and Investment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Khamlien Pholsena; the Vice-Minister for International Cooperation of the Netherlands, Christiaan Rebergen; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Rita Solange Agneketom Bogore; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Jalagania; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Naci Koru; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Ashikbayev; the Secretary of State for Cooperation of Angola, Maria Angela Braganca; the Minister of State of Belgium, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck; and the Minister of State for Finance, Planning and Economic Development of Uganda, Fred Omach. Statements were also made by the representatives of Thailand (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Maldives and Luxemburg; the observer for the European Union; the Technical Deputy Minister of Economy of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ismail Rahimi; the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Raymond Tshibanda N'tungamulongo; the Minister of Trade, Industry, Employment and Integration of the Gambia, Abdou Jobe; and the Minister Delegate in charge of Foreign Trade of Morocco, Mohammed Abbou. Statements were also made by the representatives of China, France, Finland, Rwanda, Egypt, the United States of America, Zambia, Austria, Mali, Myanmar, Eritrea, Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Guinea, Israel, India, Brazil and Canada and by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. Statements were also made by the representatives of Viet Nam, Japan, Malaysia, Romania, Bangladesh, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Argentina, Serbia, Norway, Indonesia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the United Republic of Tanzania, Ireland,

Togo, Switzerland and Azerbaijan, as well as the representatives of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Trade Organization, the International Trade Centre, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Tourism Organization.

33. The delegations welcomed the large number of high-level representatives and other participants, which demonstrated the commitment of the international community to the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

34. All representatives expressed their thanks to the Government and people of Turkey for hosting the conference and for the hospitality extended to participants and delegations. They also recognized the continued concern of Turkey for the most vulnerable people and its efforts to help the development of the least developed countries, including its commitment to hosting the soon to be operationalized technology bank for the least developed countries. Thanks were also expressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for their leadership in the fight against poverty, particularly in the least developed countries.

35. Delegates acknowledged the timeliness of the Midterm Review and the necessity of assessing the progress, constraints and lessons learned five years after the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action at the midpoint of the decade 2011-2020.

36. Many speakers acknowledged that the current moment also marked the beginning of the implementation of four other important frameworks, namely the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Many representatives stressed the importance of creating synergies between the goals of the Programme of Action and the four frameworks, especially the 2030 Agenda.

37. All Member States stressed the importance of renewed partnerships, commitments and tangible measures aimed at enhancing the sustainable development of the least developed countries.

Appraisal of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action

38. Many delegations assessed the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the least developed countries over the past five years in their respective countries, noting that despite the challenges, considerable progress in achieving positive development outcomes had been made. Since the implementation of the Programme of Action, most of the least developed countries had experienced solid economic growth, despite the low level of global economic growth during the period. Furthermore, they countries had enjoyed increased interregional trade through South-South cooperation. Progress in the priority areas of the Programme of Action in human social development, trade and good governance was also stressed.

39. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the developed and developing countries which had already provided duty- and quota-free access to their markets and called upon others to do the same. Those efforts were considered very important in order to achieve the goal of doubling the share of international exports of the least developed countries. Moreover, they reminded the plenary that foreign direct investment remained concentrated in a few economies and sectors and that there was still a need for diversification in that area. Public-private partnerships were also to be strengthened. Many underscored the need for the agreements made in favour of the least developed countries during the Tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Nairobi in 2015 to be implemented.

40. Many countries welcomed the establishment of the Governing Council of the technology bank for the least developed countries and were looking forward to the full operationalization of the bank by 2017 as science, technology and innovation remained critical to the structural transformation of the least developed countries. Cooperation in that area must therefore be strengthened and intensified. Some speakers recalled that science, technology and innovation were enablers of social, economic and sustainable development. Connectivity in the form of universal and affordable Internet access was described as a basic right and possible tool of empowerment for the least developed countries. Although digital inequality continued to pose a challenge for the least developed countries, most had made great strides in that regard and continued to work on capacity-building in the information technology sector.

Challenges and opportunities

41. Some delegates pointed out that the Midterm Review stressed that the process of implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action needed to be enhanced. Some noted that progress had been slow and difficult, but reaffirmed their belief that the Midterm Review should be a catalyst to strengthen partnerships and commitments for the next five years of the Programme of Action.

42. Some Member States recognized the progress made by the least developed countries so far, for example in human development, access to technology, reduction in maternal and child mortality, access to education and representation of women in political offices. However, most agreed that more needed to be done in order to achieve the objective of enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the graduation criteria by 2020.

43. Speakers highlighted some of the challenges still facing the least developed countries: unemployment was still high in some countries, structural transformation had been limited, vulnerability to external shocks had not been significantly reduced and changes in the sectoral composition of gross domestic product (GDP) had been slower in the least developed countries than in other developing countries. Several representatives of the least developed countries gave examples of the new challenges they had faced in the first five years of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, such as the Ebola crisis and the effects of climate change, but also listed the efforts undertaken by their Governments in development policies and the positive results achieved. Taking measures to ensure sustainable development in the least developed countries would also help in fighting extremism and radicalism. Indeed, some delegations emphasized that many of the least

developed countries faced threats of terrorism and suggested prioritizing the link between security and development.

44. More generally, some countries stated that progress had been uneven, not only between the least developed countries but also within the countries themselves. For that reason, they reminded the plenary assembly that it was of the utmost importance for the least developed countries to remain at the centre of global efforts. Many delegates stressed that development partners needed to demonstrate their strong political will to commit to the cause of the least developed countries. Several representatives stressed that the least developed countries were hosts to enormous human and natural resources, which had the potential to become important factors of development. They further emphasized that mobilizing domestic resources for sustainable development should be made a top priority.

Reaffirming the global commitment to addressing the special needs of the least developed countries

45. Some speakers referred to the political declaration of the Midterm Review, which indicated how the international community should collaborate in order to overcome the current challenges and constraints facing the least developed countries. The declaration was said to be comprehensive, balanced and forward-looking. Moreover, it was praised because it addressed, in a balanced manner, all three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental. Several representatives applauded the core message of the declaration, namely that the international community had every resource to enhance the sustainable development of the least developed countries, except time. International bodies must, according to some delegates, immediately take measures to accelerate the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

46. Many development partners of the least developed countries reaffirmed their commitment to the Programme of Action to ensure that no country was left behind in achieving its goals by 2020 and that most countries graduated from the least developed country category through sustainable economic development. The partners stressed their efforts to expand mutually beneficial partnerships with the least developed countries, scale up ODA and provide assistance to the least developed countries aimed at poverty eradication and economic growth.

47. Ensuring complementarities and synergies between the new commitments, especially the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is important for reducing the burden on the least developed countries and ensuring that all programmes will be mutually beneficial in their sustainable development.

48. The least developed countries face challenges in financing for development due to limited ODA from development partners. Some delegations expressed their concern over the drop in ODA, which had been consistent over the last few years, notwithstanding the boost in 2015. They noted that the international community had not delivered on its commitment to provide 0.15-0.20 per cent of GDP in ODA to the least developed countries. In 2014, ODA from development partners was only 0.09 per cent of GDP. Since the least developed countries are heavily dependent on ODA, many emphasized the importance of support from development partners, in order to be able to ensure sustainable development for all of the most vulnerable countries. Some speakers warned that ODA had to be stable, predictable and

substantial if it were to have a real positive impact on the development of the least developed countries.

49. Some representatives also noted low levels of foreign direct investment in the least developed countries and the need to scale that up in future, including through targeted investment promotion.

50. Most delegations recognized that North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation should all be fostered. Initiatives for development and regional integration and cooperation could offset weaknesses and create a foundation for international support to help minimize uncertainties and vulnerabilities in the least developed countries.

51. Some participants also noted the efforts made by the least developed countries to move towards graduation and reiterated that all stakeholders should help them achieve that goal. There were several calls for intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms to track their progress toward achieving the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

52. Some delegations stated that the specificity of the least developed countries should be recognized and that they should benefit from special treatment in development assistance from developed and developing countries.

53. According to several delegations, the mobilization of all actors and particularly the private sector, which had an important role to play, was necessary for the development of the least developed countries and a global vision for development financing.

54. There were several calls upon all partners to help maintain the momentum created by the Midterm Review and the other frameworks of action, by maintaining their support to help countries implement the eight priorities of the Programme of Action and other international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Several developed and developing countries reiterated their commitment to the least developed countries and gave examples of programmes and initiatives supporting their development.

55. In conclusion, all participants placed an emphasis on the importance of concerted efforts by the international community during the next five years of the Programme of Action, in order to implement the programme timely and effectively. For some speakers, the important challenges ahead and the short period of five years left underscored the urgency of the situation and called for the mobilization and coordination of all countries around the globe. Mutual accountability, deep international cooperation and enhanced partnerships were needed for the next five years.

Chapter IV
Thematic round-table meetings

Round table 1: Productive capacity, agriculture, food security and rural development

56. The round table was co-chaired by the Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives of Bangladesh, Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, and the Minister for Public Administration of Sweden, Ardalan Shekarabi. The Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development of the European Union, Neven Mimica, was the keynote speaker. Joining the discussion as panellists were the Chief Executive Officer of AbzeSolar, Princess Abze Djigma, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP and the Chief Executive Officer of Made in Africa Initiative, Helen Hai. The Deputy Director General for Field Operations and Partnerships of the International Labour Organization (ILO), served as the lead discussant.

57. During the discussion, participants emphasized that Agenda 2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement provided a comprehensive global blueprint for sustainable development, which must be implemented in synergy and coherence with the Istanbul Programme of Action. The potential gains from the implementation of the agendas were substantial and the risks of non-implementation grave for the least developed countries. Revitalized and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships were required to ensure that the least developed countries were not left behind.

58. Participants emphasized the importance of productive capacity-building for the structural economic transformation of the economies of the least developed countries and the fundamental importance of agriculture, food security and rural development.

59. Delegations agreed that there had been significant progress in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. However, that progress had not been even across the eight priority areas, nor among all the least developed countries, which continued to face challenges in their development efforts. Coherent policies and institutional approaches by the international community would enable the least developed countries to convert barriers into opportunities.

60. Agriculture continued to be the principal means of livelihood and employment in all the least developed countries. A large number of the poor depended on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihood and food security, making them vulnerable to climate change-related disasters. Climate change continued to pose a serious threat to the productivity of the least developed countries and to agriculture, food security and rural development.

61. Investment in agriculture to increase productivity, access to finance and support for the development of cutting-edge technologies and high-yielding crop varieties, leveraging recent advances in ICT, biotechnology and genetic engineering, among others, were required for self-reliance and sustainable development. Development partners expressed their support for the least developed countries, highlighting their target to redouble climate support for them, recommending integrated climate-smart agriculture approaches and the use of efficient agrotechnologies to move towards more productive and sustainable food systems.

62. The relationship between women's roles in agriculture production, land ownership and gender equality was highlighted in the discussions. Participants agreed that investing in gender equality would benefit all members of society, advocating for the removal of social and legal barriers to ensure equal access to decent and productive work.

63. As a result of declining productivity and in some cases premature deindustrialization, the economies of the least developed countries were growing at a rate below their potential. Economic performance in some of them had had a limited impact on poverty eradication, owing to limited productivity growth, low employment-intensity of growth and increased vulnerability to external shocks. Participants highlighted the need for product diversification, adding value and value retention, as well as the effective participation of the least developed countries in regional and global value chains, critical for building productive capacities and achieving structural transformation.

64. During the discussion, participants emphasized that social protection was an important tool for social inclusion and poverty eradication. Effective social protection policies were key investments in human development and contributed to growth, productive employment and decent work. The majority of the least developed countries had limited or no social protection programmes. Strong social protection floors could serve as a solid foundation for enhancing productivity.

65. The interactive discussion touched on the role of science, technology and innovation in eradicating poverty, removing constraints and unleashing structural transformation and sustainable development. Participants welcomed the early operationalization of the technology bank for the least developed countries.

66. Participants considered that ODA should play the role of catalyst in attracting foreign direct investment and in domestic resource mobilization. Investment in physical and soft infrastructure was essential. Mobilizing private investment and creating an enabling environment for the private sector through structural and regulatory transformation would guarantee long-term inclusive growth, generate quality employment and achieve higher productivity.

Round table 2: Trade and commodities, economic diversification and graduation

67. The round table was co-chaired by the Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia, Axel Addy, and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy, Mario Giro. The Director of the Earth Institute of Columbia University, Jeffery Sachs, was the keynote speaker. Joining the discussion as panellists were the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Executive Chairman of South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, Posh Raj Pandey. The Permanent Representative of Maldives to the United Nations, Ahmed Sareer, and the Deputy Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC) were the lead discussants.

68. The participants emphasized that foreign direct investment flows to the least developed countries were concentrated in a few countries and the decline of commodity prices had recently held back economic growth. It was thus extremely important to diversify away from the extractive industries towards industrialization and a resilient market system capable of withstanding global shocks. That would require implementing domestic reforms to create an enabling regulatory

environment. Along with global access to major markets, that could enable early graduation for many of the least developed countries.

69. The risks of premature deindustrialization and a service-dominated economy were stressed, while the benefits of diversification included its importance for economic growth and structural transformation, as well as for building resilience to macroeconomic shocks.

70. Key conditions for diversification included infrastructure, technology, education and the capacity to compete. Coherent development policies, public investment and financial plans for universal access to electricity were a sine qua non for development and industrialization. Transport was also crucial, as the least developed countries could not sell any goods without roads, railways and ports to get them to market at low cost. Finally, broadband connectivity was critical for competitiveness in the next 15 years, since value chain management and logistics depended on instant reliable connectivity, as did good governance, health and education. An ICT framework was also crucial and the private sector often financed the infrastructure necessary for broadband. That could help develop e-commerce, e-government and other services, including electronic transfers or remittances at low cost.

71. Participants emphasized that the recent slump in energy prices could be an opportunity to develop renewable energy. It was thus crucial to accelerate the operationalization of the technology bank. Strengthening productive capacity could lead to product diversification and an increasing share of exports. Collective investment was therefore needed in infrastructure, energy, science, technology and innovation, as well as private sector development. Simple, transparent and predictable rules of origin for preferential market access were important for participation in regional and global value chains, and regional and multilateral agreements could contribute to increasing competitiveness and reducing economic vulnerability. The least developed countries also needed to diversify their markets beyond Europe and North America, with increased opportunities in South-South trade, especially to East Asia.

72. The importance of small and medium enterprises was stressed, as they constituted the majority of firms in the least developed countries and accounted for the lion's share of employment. It was thus crucial to help them get into regional and global value chains, removing non-tariff measures and simplifying standards which were very complex. Voluntary standards were likewise increasingly demanded in target markets and needed to be addressed.

73. Several participants mentioned that graduation should be seen as a means rather than an end, as it was not a guarantee for sustainable development. The international community needed to provide more support, also after graduation, including the retention of preferential access for the least developed countries, as long as they had low scores on the economic vulnerability index. It was critical to ensure that there was no reversal of hard-earned gains as a result of support measures being withdrawn. There was a need to elaborate effective, smooth transition strategies based on national leadership and ownership, which should be integrated into national development plans. Stakeholders needed to be engaged early on and should use the criteria of the least developed countries for the allocation of ODA. The importance of the portal for support measures and a new graduation

diagnostics toolkit prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were also acknowledged.

74. It was pointed out that a country can never graduate from being a small island developing State, as exemplified by the cases of Vanuatu, Samoa and Kiribati, for which graduation was postponed. Even though countries met the graduation criteria, vulnerability remained a key challenge. Graduating countries were expected to develop smooth transition strategies in collaboration with their development partners. The importance of ensuring that development gains were not eroded after graduation was stressed.

Round table 3: Human and social development and good governance at all levels

75. The round table was co-chaired by the Vice-President of Ghana, Kwesi Bekoe Amissah-Arthur, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Raymond Tshibanda N'tungamulongo. The Personal Representative for Africa of the Chancellor in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, Günter Nooke, was the keynote speaker. Joining the discussion as panellists were the Minister of State and Adviser to the President of Guinea on relations with multilateral institutions, Kerfalla Yansané, the Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women and the Director General of International Development Law Organization, Irene Khan. The Director of the Programme Division of the United Nations Population Fund was the lead discussant.

76. During the discussions participants emphasized that progress had been made in the social sector with improvements in both the health and education fields. The drop in mortality rates and in the prevalence of certain waterborne diseases was offered as an example to support progress in the health sector. The high enrolment rates, particularly in primary education, were also discussed as concrete examples. The enactment of national laws which criminalized certain practices, in particular against girls, were also highlighted as tangible expressions of progress.

77. The sustained improvement in education and health was particularly encouraging. On the other hand, the Ebola epidemic was also highlighted during the discussions as indicative of the fact that obstacles remained and more needed to be done, including in better addressing and strengthening health systems on the ground. In that regard, support was expressed during the discussions for a global fund to promote the strengthening of the health systems of the least developed countries.

78. Good governance was reaffirmed as fundamental to ensuring that inclusive economic growth could become a reality in the least developed countries. It was suggested that good governance provided an enabling environment where society could thrive. Respect for the rule of law and the development of regulatory frameworks that were people centred were also promoted during the discussions.

79. Further, good governance coupled with a sense of responsibility by all and a strong commitment to "leave no one behind" were highlighted as the basis upon which the sustainable development aspirations of the least developed countries could be realized. The call was made to strengthen leadership and institutions that promoted good governance. In that regard the need also to strengthen the capacity of those that implemented good governance and promoted the rule of law was discussed. The need to avoid reducing resources to support social protection during periods of economic slowdown was also highlighted.

80. The need to ensure gender parity and to bring women and youth into the workforce was highlighted as being essential to the sustainable development of the least developed countries. The declaration in the Istanbul Programme of Action that men, women and children were the greatest assets of the least developed countries was reaffirmed. In that connection, the call for better integration of gender equality into all other global normative processes was made.

81. The need to ensure that gender was mainstreamed in all the Sustainable Development Goals was also highlighted. The benefits that empowered youth and women could bring to the economies of the least developed countries were emphasized, with calls made on the need to plug such gender gaps. Examples of women's empowerment at the national level, including in the political and leadership arena, were shared during the discussions. On the legal aspects associated with gender, it was stated that laws and institutions by themselves were not enough. Women wanted justice as well as jobs.

82. The role of ICT as a cross-cutting enabler for implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda was also discussed, including connectivity and the role of ICT and social media in contributing to ensuring transparency and promoting democracy. The need for implementation of ICT solutions that would allow the youth of the least developed countries to catch up with their counterparts in the rest of the world was also highlighted.

83. Examples of concrete partnerships that empowered women and youth were shared during the discussions, including multi-stakeholder partnerships with more than one of the least developed countries and their development partners in both the public and private sectors. The need for regional approaches was also discussed, where issues, such as access to seaports and transportation-related issues, were highlighted as areas for closer cooperation and collaboration. It was also pointed out that there was a need to consider specificities which highlighted the vast range of the least developed countries and that issues, including the small size of some countries, were also considered in the various approaches to addressing the vast array of challenges facing them, as well as harnessing opportunities where they existed.

Round table 4: Multiple crises and other emerging challenges, mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building

84. The round table was co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Manasseh Maelanga, and the Minister of State of Belgium, Annemie Neyts Uyttebroeck. The Senior Vice-President of the World Bank for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations, and Partnerships, Mahmoud Mohieldin, was the keynote speaker. Joining the discussion as panellists were the Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States of UNDP, the President of the Fondation pour les Etudes et Recherches sur le Développement International and Emeritus Professor at the University of Auvergne, Patrick Guillaumont, the Executive Chairman of Global IME Bank, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, and the Head of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, Ahmet Arif Ergin. The Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Amir Mahmoud Abdulla, and the Deputy Director of the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Federico Bonaglia, were the lead discussants.

85. Participants concluded that the least developed countries were particularly vulnerable because of their dependence on natural resources and their limited capacity to manage and withstand shocks. It was thus crucial to turn their natural resources into sustainable capital assets. Over the next 15 years, many challenges lay ahead. They included demographic transitions, the changing nature of globalization, urbanization, pressures on natural resources and the impact of climate change. In the short- and medium-term, the least developed countries would be confronted with the end of the commodity boom cycle and declining capital inflows, all of which would cause rising debt and fiscal pressures. Water scarcity would worsen in the Middle East and the Sahel, while the cost of more frequent floods would increase, thus burdening the budgets of States and households.

86. Insufficient response to shocks would have serious consequences for long-term stability and development. There was therefore a need for comprehensive efforts to manage the impact of shocks and build resilience.

87. The Green Climate Fund makes up only a small part of the $100 billion allocated for climate change. For adaptation, it was proposed that funds be allocated based on the vulnerability of countries to climate change. The need for an index of vulnerability to climate change was also highlighted, since objective criteria were needed for the allocation of funds based on the degree of vulnerability.

88. It was stated that it was crucial to mobilize a range of resources from all sources, such as the World Bank Pacific Resilience Programme. Counter-cyclical fiscal mechanisms could provide an important coping strategy. Private capital markets were mentioned as another source used to insure against natural hazard risks. Insurance in general was a tool which could be used more widely to cope with a variety of risks and vulnerabilities.

89. The least developed countries needed more support in the areas of research and technology transfer, since innovation was key to adaptation and the mitigation of climate change effects. The technology bank would go a long way towards strengthening the national research networks already established in the least developed countries and in building capacity.

90. It was stressed that in order to cope with falling and volatile commodity prices, disease outbreaks, natural disasters and other crises and challenges, a shift from reacting to crises to proactively preparing for them was crucial. That included strengthening early-warning systems, preparing disaster risk reduction strategies and establishing national risk reduction authorities. Several participants also noted that humanitarian crises, terrorism, extremism and other forms of conflict must also be addressed in the context of tackling vulnerabilities.

91. Strong international support should go hand in hand with domestic resource mobilization. It was estimated that strengthening domestic resource mobilization could raise GDP by an additional 2 per cent, more than three times current ODA, which is stagnant and not under the control of the least developed countries. The need for technical cooperation and joint initiatives on strengthening tax systems was highlighted, including in the area of tax audit capacity, which was crucial for domestic resource mobilization and needed support from development partners.

92. Social protection systems were mentioned as providing the most effective means to address the multiple dimensions of poverty, as part of a broad government framework to address chronic vulnerability. Furthermore, it was stressed that

country-specific approaches were needed, as was a greater focus on employment creation and the reduction of poverty. Networks of local banks in conjunction with international financial institutions could collaborate on mobilizing resources. The private sector could build human capital, generate technical innovation and increased employment, and there was thus a need for collaboration between the private sector, development partners and local banks.

93. During the discussion the need to improve aid efficiency, predictability and transparency and increase the focus on aid quality and delivery was highlighted, with ODA playing a catalytic role in building local capacity and complementing the efforts of the least developed countries in sustainable development. Several ways to make ODA more efficient were mentioned, such as keeping donor countries accountable, ensuring that the least developed countries could also benefit from concessional loans, so as not to endanger debt sustainability, and the newly modified accounting system for loans, which incentivized Member States to give loans to the least developed countries.

94. It was stressed that more support for the least developed countries was needed to build statistical capacity. Current efforts were acknowledged, including the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the efforts to enhance the capacity of the statistical authorities.

Chapter V
Adoption of the political declaration

95. At the sixth plenary meeting, on 29 May 2016, the Midterm Review adopted the political declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, as technically updated.

Chapter VI
Adoption of the report on the Midterm Review

96. Also at the sixth plenary meeting, on 29 May 2016, the Midterm Review adopted its draft report (A/CONF.228/L.3) and authorized the Rapporteur to complete the report to reflect the proceedings of the closing plenary.

Chapter VII
Closure of the Midterm Review

97. Also at the sixth plenary meeting, the Midterm Review heard statements by a member of the national parliament of Mali, Guediouma Sanogo, and the International Coordinator of LDC Watch, Gauri Pradhan. Statements were also made by the Secretary-General and the President of the Midterm Review, who then declared closed the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020.

Annex I

List of documents

Symbol	*Title or description*
A/CONF.228/L.1	Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020
A/CONF.228/L.2	Expression of thanks to the people and Government of Turkey
A/CONF.228/L.3	Draft report of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020
A/CONF.228/L.4	List of Participants to the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020.

Annex II

Side events

Financing the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries: diversifying the financing toolbox and managing vulnerability.

Conveners: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), French Development Agency.

Support measures: improving knowledge, implementation and effectiveness for smooth transition from the least developed country category.

Conveners: secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and Fondation pour les études et recherches sur le développement international.

Mobilizing investment in the rural agenda in the least developed countries.

Conveners: International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific least developed countries.

Conveners: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Government of the Netherlands.

Growth, employment, and decent work in the least developed countries, 2000-2015: no least developed country left behind.

Convener: International Labour Organization.

Investment advisory support for the least developed countries.

Conveners: Italy, International Development Law Organization.

Leveraging skills for employment and entrepreneurship.

Convener: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Enhancing the productive capacities of women and youth through multi-stakeholder partnerships: paving ways to the sustainable graduation of the least developed countries.

Convener: United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Taking technology to the last mile.

Conveners: Turkey, United Nations Capital Development Fund.

The European Investment Fund's role in catalysing least developed country graduation: lessons from the field.

Conveners: European Investment Fund secretariat, Commonwealth secretariat and graduated countries.

Inclusive business for sustainable development in the least developed countries.

Conveners: UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development, UNDP, Government of Turkey.

Addressing emerging opportunities and risks to least developed countries: graduation in Africa in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Convener: UNDP.

Towards an integrated approach to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action: perspectives from African and Arab least developed countries.

Conveners: Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank joint initiative to support the least developed countries and strengthening tax systems.

Conveners: IMF, World Bank.

Development finance in the least developed countries: tackling risks and vulnerabilities.

Conveners: Benin, Bangladesh, France, Kiribati, Sweden, United Nations Capital Development Fund, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, Fondation pour les études et recherches sur le développement international.

Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action: measures and initiatives taken to assist the least developed countries' integration in global trade.

Convener: World Trade Organization.

Harnessing technology and innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: challenges and opportunities for the least developed countries.

Convener: ESCAP.

Fostering structural economic progress toward graduation from least developed country status.

Conveners: UNCTAD Common Fund for Commodities in collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Science, technology and innovation inspired sustainable development: building capacity in the least developed countries.

Conveners: UNESCO, World Intellectual Property Organization.

Getting to the last mile: a discussion on lessons learned.

Conveners: United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNDP.

Financial inclusion: innovative solutions for the least developed countries.

Conveners: United Nations Capital Development Fund, Italy.

Showcasing a partnership approach in supporting the Istanbul Programme of Action — the case of the European Investment Fund: trade for least developed country development.

Conveners: European Investment Fund secretariat, UNDP, World Bank, World Trade Organization, UNCTAD, International Trade Centre, UNIDO, World Tourism Organization.

Building resilience for food security in the least developed countries.

Conveners: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Food Programme.

Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action: tracking progress and accelerating transformation.

Convener: LDC IV Monitor.

Progress in addressing adaptation to climate change in the least developed countries.

Convener: secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Annex III

Antalya declaration of the least developed country civil society forum

1. We, the representatives of civil society organizations from the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and beyond, who have met here in Antalya, Turkey, from 26 to 28 May 2016 at the LDC Civil Society Forum of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 have very much appreciated the opportunity and space provided to assess and express our views on the development challenges of the least developed countries and their graduation from the least developed country category, as agreed in 2011 during the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Istanbul.

2. Following our assessment, sharing and deliberations, we have concluded that the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation of at least 50 per cent of the least developed countries by 2020 from the least developed country category still remains a distant dream. Thus, although graduation prospects are promising for a few countries, the least developed countries in general are lagging behind the Programme of Action goal on graduation from the least developed country category.

3. Special attention should be given to those least developed countries which have been undergoing painfully protracted political transitions after internal conflicts, natural disasters and severe economic crises towards building sustainable peace and transformation of just and equitable societies. Further, the implementation of Istanbul Programme of Action is considered as a slow and weak move towards strengthening least developed countries' capacities in order to mitigate the adverse impacts of external shocks, including climate change impacts, disasters and other unique vulnerabilities related to the special situations of the least developed countries, such as extreme desertification, sea-level rise, glacial melting and glacial lake outburst floods and ocean acidification.

4. There is, therefore, urgency for demonstrated political will by the Governments of the least developed countries in terms of ownership and leadership with genuine delivery of means of implementation and policy coherence by development partners. Just and democratic governance, mutual accountability and transparency are imperative to ensure the right to development of the peoples in the least developed countries.

5. The fact that majority of the least developed countries are plagued by violence, instability and conflict are clearly symptomatic of the structural causes of poverty, vulnerability, injustices and marginalization in the least developed countries, along with the exploitation and extraction of natural resources, including illegal, unregulated and unrecorded fishing. We are calling for a structural transformation of the relations between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, men and women, the elites and those without resources, the dominant and the marginalized peoples.

6. Adding to those woes is the escalating climate change crisis and frequency of natural disasters that have led to the reversal of any development gains, which urgently call for climate justice for the least developed countries which have been least responsible but ironically most affected, being at the forefront, aggravating their development needs and increasing their burden. Moreover, loss and damage as a consequence of climate change has remained a major burden for the least developed countries, the reparations of which were not agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement. We therefore call for the Warsaw International Mechanism to come with a specific support mechanism for loss and damage in the least developed countries, as well as clear sources of support for adaptation actions within the Paris Agreement that deliver new, adequate, sustainable and predictable flows of finance. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as agreed in the Climate Convention must be abided by the developed partners. We also call for the protection of human rights of climate-induced migrants by either revising the 1951 Refugee Convention or drawing up a new protocol.

7. Immediate formulation and implementation of effective policies for resilience-building; the right to health; food and water sovereignty leading to sustainable agriculture and fisheries; and the protection of ecosystems, forests and biodiversity; have become a development priority for the least developed countries.

8. We are calling for fair trade within the regime of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and beyond in terms of bilateral, regional and plurilateral trade and investment agreements, primarily driven by the neoliberal market-oriented trade agenda. Special and differential treatment, policy flexibility for thee least developed countries and the Bali least developed country package need to be made operational immediately in the spirit of the development agenda of the Doha Development Round of WTO negotiations.

9. The bleak development situation in the least developed countries is further exacerbated by the debt crisis, which is an unjust use of their already limited resources, which instead can be channelled toward much-needed social and human development. We call for the immediate and unconditional cancellation of all least developed country debt, which is totally unsustainable and detrimental to the achievement of poverty eradication and sustainable development in the least developed countries.

10. We are firm in our conviction and call that no Sustainable Development Goals would materialize worldwide without them being effectively realized in the least developed countries, hence we reiterate our call for "No Sustainable Development Goals without the least developed countries" and underscore the need for increased synergy and coherence between the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and other internationally agreed development goals.

11. We urge the Governments of the least developed countries to promote gender justice and guarantee in their development strategies the full enjoyment by women of their rights, as enshrined in domestic, regional and international laws. The good practices to this end needs to be replicated by the Governments of all the least developed countries. Promotion of women entrepreneurship and self-employment including of the rural marginalized populations are key, especially in the context of the climate change crisis and its devastating impacts. Governments must ensure the

effective participation of women in policy and decision-making, monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of strategies targeted towards the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

12. We call upon the private sector to respect the sovereignty of States and adhere to human rights norms and standards.

13. The least developed countries are the worst victims of illicit financial flows and developed partners must take immediate steps to abolish tax havens. We urgently need to combat capital flight, tax evasion, tax avoidance and erosion of the tax base to achieve tax justice. We additionally urge for an independent United Nations tax commission.

14. Transfer and promotion of appropriate innovative technologies to the least developed countries is long overdue and hence we urge the process of transfer of technology, the establishment of the technology bank for the least developed countries be expedited and indigenous technologies promoted that are vital for the development of the least developed countries.

15. We urge that regional cooperation, South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation be promoted to enhance the productive capacity of the least developed countries, to fight against poverty, promote structural transformation and achieve sustained and equitable economic growth, reversing gender inequality, social exclusion and marginalization in the least developed countries.

16. We strongly believe that the fundamentals of democratic institution-building and human rights principles must be respected, protected and fulfilled in any policy decisions and actions on the ground. We, therefore, ask the States of the world to uphold these principles for the materialization of Istanbul Programme of Action.

17. The least developed countries and their development partners, including international development agencies, should develop an overarching framework for the smooth transition towards graduation and a set of time-bound specific and results-oriented guidelines that promote sustainable post-graduation developments.

18. Civil society is an integral and independent development stakeholder in its own right and hence we call for continued and more policy space to enhance its participation and decision-making in national, regional and international development processes. We will continue to engage in the monitoring, follow-up and implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

19. We conclude by extending our thanks and appreciation to LDC Watch and fellow participants here in Antalya for their contributions and ardent political commitment, the Government and people of Turkey, the Secretary-General of the Midterm Review conference with his entire team from the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service.